CHAPTER TEN

THE HOUSE OF FAME: ROMAN HISTORY AND AUGUSTAN POLITICS IN *METAMORPHOSES* 11–15

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1. *History Ovidianized*

For readers of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* who have made their way through the labyrinth of mythological tales that comprise Books 1–10, Book 11 is in some ways a fresh start. It begins the third and last pentad; and, as he marks this formal boundary, Ovid introduces a new historical emphasis. Troy is founded, and from Troy's story that of Rome soon arises: Roman subject matter, settings, and themes occupy ever more of our attention as the work approaches its end. Ovid includes some of the same tales that appear also in the *Fasti*, his most Roman work in terms of its proclaimed subject matter, the Roman calendar: *tempora cum causis Latium digesta per annum (F.* 1.1).[1] As we read of Hippolytus deified as Virbius, for instance, or encounter the list of Alban kings, the last pentad of the *Metamorphoses* may sometimes begin to resemble the *Fasti*, most of which Ovid composed during the same period of his life.[2] And yet Books 11–15 of the *Metamorphoses* are fully continuous with the first ten books—simultaneously a fresh start and a seamless continuation. Even the historical emphasis is a development of long-established patterns. First Trojan, then Roman subjects signal the work's conclusion, wherein the large-scale historical progression promised in the work's opening lines will be fulfilled: having set out "from the first beginnings of the world," *primaque ab origine mundi* (1.3), Ovid's narrative will now reach "my own times," *mea tempora* (1.4)—the present for both author and

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[1] In fact, the *Fasti* blends Greek and Roman tales, "*res Romana* served up *à la grecque*," as Kenney (1982) 430 remarks; for its aetiological mode, see Miller, chapter 6 above.

[2] Virbius, *Met.* 14.497–546; *F.* 6.737–56; Alban kings, *Met.* 14.609–22; *F.* 4.41–52.

readers. Thus, if we, after reading of so many nymphs and maidens transformed into trees or waterfowl, are surprised to find Romulus turning up in Book 14 of the *Metamorphoses* and Julius Caesar in Book 15, Ovid's development and fulfillment of narrative patterns also remind us that from the start we had reason to expect such figures to appear. His vast work of transformative myth embraces even them.

Whereas Troy and Rome contribute something new to the last pentad of the *Metamorphoses*, they also function in a fashion that Ovid has made throughly familiar. Already in Book 1, the council of the gods, called by Jupiter to discuss Lycaon's crime, offers striking Romanization of heaven's architecture and social distinctions, with mention of *atria nobilium* (1.172), *plebs* (1.173), and the like.[3] When Ovid represents Jupiter summoning the gods to the *palatia caeli* (1.176), Jupiter becomes not only Romanized but a reflection of Augustus, whose house stood on the earthly Palatine Hill. Shortly thereafter, Ovid explicitly addresses Augustus in a context that links Lycaon's assassination attempt on Jupiter to contemporary attempts on Augustus's life (1.200–205). Both crises cause astonishment throughout the world: *nec tibi grata minus pietas, Auguste, tuorum est,/quam fuit illa Ioui* (1.204–5). Thus, in returning to current events at the end of the work, Ovid recalls to our minds their heralded arrival near the beginning.

Also familiar is the narrative use Ovid makes of his Trojan and Roman subject matter: it functions largely as a frame for other tales, which are often only tenuously related to the newly-prominent national themes. We are well aware, when we arrive at this point, that traditionally important and familiar cycles of myth, such as those concerning Theseus and Hercules in Books 8 and 9, function mainly as framing devices that connect tales; many of these are only tangentially related to the framing narrative, or are even altogether remote from it. No sooner does Ovid introduce Troy than he begins to employ it in this now-familiar narrative mode: the traditional story appears to establish a structural pattern for the progress of the narrative, but it is soon displaced, as tales succeed tales. Troy may be familiar ground, but its familiarity does not enable us to predict our convoluted path through Ovid's work with any confidence. Who could guess, when Laomedon founds Troy at 11.194, that Ceyx and

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[3] On Romanization see Wheeler (1999) 172–77, 197–205; Solodow (1988) 82–86.

Alcyone would occupy much of our attention in Book 11? As we read their tragic tale, we may observe thematic links to other tales in the *Metamorphoses*, as in the personification of Somnus (11.592–649), which formally recalls those of Inuidia in Book 2 (760–832) and of Fames in Book 8 (799–822); yet the topic of Troy has disappeared, at least for now, from view. So has the new historical emphasis; for the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone is as mythical, as fabulous, as anything in the preceding ten books.

Indirection and unpredictability remain characteristic of the narrative even as Ovid draws historical and Roman material within his scope. One might expect history and Roman themes to alter the *Metamorphoses*; instead, as this chapter aims to show, the *Metamorphoses* alters them. An especially powerful symbol of Ovid's transformative language is his last and most ambitious personification, the House of Fame near the beginning of Book 12. After Ceyx and Alcyone, Ovid abruptly returns to Trojan subjects with Aesacus, as we will see below, then recounts the sacrifice of Iphigenia and the arrival of the Greek fleet at Troy. But before proceeding with the Trojan War, he introduces a remarkable descriptive passage on Fama, beginning with these lines:

> orbe locus medio est inter terrasque fretumque
> caelestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi;
> unde, quod est usquam, quamuis regionibus absit,
> inspicitur, penetratque cauas uox omnis ad aures.
> Fama tenet summaque domum sibi legit in arce. (12.39–43)

> There is a place at the middle of the world, between land, sea, and the heavenly region, at the boundary of the threefold universe. From here one can see anything anywhere, however distant its place; and every voice comes to one's hollow ears. Rumor holds it, and selected its topmost summit for her house.

This is the last and the most ambitious, though not the longest, of the large-scale personifications in the *Metamorphoses*—ambitious because, whereas with Inuidia (2.760–832) and Fames (8.799–822) Ovid achieves a rich and grimly detailed impression of corporality through his descriptive language, here indistinctness is paradoxically the goal of precise description.[4] The lines just quoted appear to establish the

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[4] For a longer treatment of Fama in the context of Ovidian wit, see Tissol (1997) 85–88, and Rosati, chapter 9 above.

place of Fama's house, but in a way that defeats definition; for the house occupies a liminal site, hovering at the boundaries between earth, sea, and sky. The structure itself—if it can be called a structure—scarcely separates inside from outside, for its porous nature defeats such distinctions:

> innumerosque aditus ac mille foramina tectis
> addidit et nullis inclusit limina portis:
> nocte dieque patet; tota est ex aere sonanti,
> tota fremit uocesque refert iteratque, quod audit.
> nulla quies intus nullaque silentia parte. (12.44–48)

She added innumerable approaches to the building, and a thousand openings. With no doors did she shut its threshold: it lies open night and day. The whole house is of resounding brass, produces a roar, echoes and repeats what it hears. There is no quiet within, silence in no quarter.

In and out of the house issue personified rumors:

> atria turba tenet: ueniunt, leue uulgus, euntque
> mixtaque cum ueris passim commenta uagantur
> milia rumorum confusaque uerba uolutant. (12.53–55)

A throng occupies its halls; they come and go, a light crowd; lies mixed with truth wander here and there by the thousands; and the confused words of rumor roll about.

Only when this expansive description is finished do we learn its relevance to its surroundings: rumors of the Greek expedition have reached Troy (12.63–66). This house of Fama and her attendant rumors, "lies mixed with truth," creates a remarkable preface to the beginning of the Trojan War, inviting us readers to consider it as an interpretive comment on all that follows. Feeney connects the passage to themes of poetic authority in the *Metamorphoses*;[5] indeed, the authority of Ovid's epic predecessors, especially Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, is at issue in the later books of the *Metamorphoses*, where extensively adapted—sometimes severely distorted—versions of their tales are woven into a new fabric. For much of the rest of Book 12, for instance, Nestor narrates the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs (12.210–535), as he did in Book 1 of the *Iliad* (1.263–68): but Homer's version is a brief summary, meant to illus-

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5 Feeney (1991) 247–49; see also Zumwalt (1977).

trate a point in its context, Ovid's a vast expansion that engulfs its context, displacing the Trojan War in our attention for hundreds of lines.

Fama dominates the rest of Ovid's poem, from Book 12 to the end, not only because of the formal introductory description of the house of Fama, but also because of the increasing role of internal narration in the later books: as the poem proceeds, the epic narrator recedes, and more and more tales are reported by an internal narrator to an internal audience.[6] Fama also forms a boundary for Books 12–15, prominently recurring at the very end of the *Metamorphoses*, where *fama* provides the means of the poet's continued survival: *perque omnia saecula fama,/siquid habent ueri uatum praesagia, uiuam* (15.878–79).

The recurring presence of Fama serves as a reminder of the fundamental lack of definition and stability characteristic of narrative style throughout the work. Flux remains Ovid's theme to the end, and Fama provides both a symbol and an embodiment of flux within the narrative. Fama resists the tendency toward interpretive simplicity and transparency that the introduction of historical and political topics might lead us to expect. As we proceed through the last pentad, historical and historico-political modes of understanding events, however pervasive their presence, ultimately never reduce Ovidian flux to order. Fate, for instance, a cosmic principle beloved of some Greek and Roman historians, whose workings they trace in the unfolding of events,[7] duly turns up from time to time in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and does so as a theme of historicized myth that is likely to remind us of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Yet, whereas the *Aeneid* is deeply imbued with a sense of fate, guiding the reader to a teleological understanding of myth and history, fate is an historical prop in the *Metamorphoses*—part of the furniture of historicized myth. Far from dominating its context, the context dominates it, as in the summaries of the *Aeneid* that Ovid employs as framing devices in Books 13 and 14: *non tamen euersam Troiae cum moenibus esse/spem quoque fata sinunt* (*Met.* 13.623–24). These lines introduce Aeneas's departure from Troy with unmistakable reference to Virgil's plot and theme. Whereas

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[6] See Wheeler (1999) 162–65 and Rosati, chapter 9 above.

[7] See Walbank (1957) 1:16–26 on Tyche in Polybius; Fornara (1983) 81–82 on fate in Livy.

Virgil integrates fate into the structure and architecture of his poem, however, Ovid reduces fate and its impact on events to barest summary. He acknowledges Virgil's historical vision without permitting that vision to structure his narrative or his readers' experience of it. Instead, he appropriates Virgilian language for a characteristic Ovidian witticism, playing simultaneously on the literal and figurative senses of *euersam*. Troy's walls are physically overturned, but her hopes—conceptually and metaphorically—are not overturned. "Sylleptic wit" of this kind, as I have maintained elsewhere,[8] saturates the *Metamorphoses* and embodies its themes of transformation on the narrative surface: the loss of human identity in metamorphosis, the shifting of boundary between human and natural, indeed the obscuring of any such boundary—are events typical of the *Metamorphoses*; and Ovid now sets the plot of Virgil's *Aeneid* among them, exploiting Virgilian language for his own transformative wit. Although in the last pentad there is a shift to historical and national themes, and with them a more direct engagement with Ovid's epic predecessors, the *Metamorphoses* remains the same poem it was. The porous, echoing, boundary-less, and visually indistinct house of Fame incorporates all within it.

Ovid's epic predecessors are a conspicuous presence in the last pentad, and readers familiar with them may try to understand Ovid's material in similar terms. Yet Ovidian slipperiness remains: Ovid refuses to be pinned down, to yield to interpretive stability, although his readers may crave it. In fact, by introducing interpretive frameworks familiar from his predecessors—Virgilian fate, for instance, in the lines quoted above—Ovid takes advantage of his readers' desire for clarity: he invites us to reach conclusions, then fails to sustain them. Virgilian fate is one interpretive possibility that turns up in the *Metamorphoses*, yet without the structured development that Virgil gave it; Augustan historical vision is another.

By introducing historical and political subjects into his work, Ovid invites readers to consider the relationship of the *Metamorphoses* to the world outside it—not only to the *Aeneid* and earlier Roman epic on historical themes, but also to Augustan ideology and its expression outside poetry—in the architectural projects, for instance, by which Augustus transformed the Romans' physical environment. When Ovid introduces the voyage of Aeneas—alluding to the plot and even

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8 Tissol (1997) 18–26.

the vocabulary of Virgil's epic—he acknowledges his contemporary readers' awareness that the *Aeneid* has overwhelmed other versions of this story: Ovid could not retell this story with directing readers' awareness from his own text to Virgil's. When Ovid incorporates the apotheosis of Romulus into the narrative of Book 14, readers are likely to find that their thoughts turn unavoidably to Augustus's identification of himself as the new Romulus, and to accompanying images and slogans concerning the re-foundation and renewal of Rome. Because Augustus eventually gains, like Romulus, a place among the *diui*, Ovid's apotheosis of Romulus invites his readers at least provisionally to define the relationship between this figure from the remote past and his contemporary embodiment.

Ovid presents a parade of heroes in the later books of the *Metamorphoses*. Hercules leads the way in Book 9; then Aeneas, Romulus, Julius Caesar, and Augustus form a sequence of apotheosized mortals. These figures are already iconic when they turn up in Ovid's poem—iconic in the sense that they resemble images that are powerfully identified with meanings, like the statues of these very heroes that stood in Augustus's forum. Because Ovid's parade of heroes arrives accompanied by preexisting interpretive baggage, it will be worthwhile to contrast these two fundamentally different sites of meaning, each with its own ways of associating ancient with contemporary heroes: the Forum of Augustus, an architectural space well designed and equipped to promote a unified and coherent set of messages about the relationship of past to present; and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a fluid narrative on the prevalence of change, whose author enacts his theme by mischievous artistry, establishing patterns of meaning, then disrupting and fracturing them. Historical patterns are among those that Ovid deliberately reduces to incoherence. Each of these sites of meaning is powerfully manipulative, and each achieves its impact by means well suited to the message. Meeting a Roman hero in the Forum Augusti, the observer's upward gaze would encounter not only an impressive image, but also a *titulus*, identifying him, and an *elogium*, recording his achievements.[9] Furthermore, this experience takes place within an architectural complex, the Forum Augusti, erected by Augustus in payment of a vow made while

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[9] On the Forum Augusti and its sculptural program, see Zanker (1968); Kockel in Steinby (1993–2000) 2:289–95.

fighting his adoptive father's assassins at the Battle of Philippi. Within
so structured an experience, the observer of its visual images and
inscriptional texts is unlikely to go far astray in interpreting them.

Although the battle occurred in 42 B.C.E., the Forum itself, ded-
icated in 2 B.C.E., was a recent reminder of that event for the read-
ers of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the parallel exedras along its longer
sides stood statues of Aeneas on one side and Romulus on the other.[10]
For Ovid to set the parallel apotheoses of these same heroes near
each other in Book 14 is to make inevitable the reader's recogni-
tion of Augustan meanings attached to these deified heroes. At the
same time, in the *Metamorphoses* these figures are iconic in a far less
tightly regulated context of meanings than they are in the forum.
Though now purely verbal, they resemble ideological statements less
than do the forum's statues; for Ovid presents his portraits, so to
speak, without *titulus* and *elogium* to regulate their interpretation. Thus
exposed, the portraits lose their interpretive transparency and become
vulnerable to incorporation into Ovidian flux.

Consistent with the organization and coherence of the Forum
Augusti is the fact that its symbolism is easy to interpret. Within the
temple of Mars Ultor, for instance, stood cult statues of Mars, the
father of Romulus, parent and protector of the Romans, and Venus,
the ancestress of the Julian *gens*. Everything about these images directs
the viewer's attention away from the adultery of Mars and Venus
so prominent in their mythological tradition. Only the irreverent and
satirical perspective that Ovid offers in *Tristia* 2 resists the ennobling
abstraction of such figures and drags adultery back into view. There,
Ovid describes the cult statues of Mars and Venus, who stood next
to each other in the temple's cella, as *Venus Vltori iuncta* (*Tr.* 2.296),
"Venus joined to the Avenger"—an expression that invites reflection
on the sexual significance of *iungere*.[11] Venus's husband stands out-
side the door, *uir ante fores.*[12]

A myth of political origin, its official representation in art, and
resistance to it are prominent also in the *Metamorphoses* in the tale of

[10] See Zanker (1988) 201–3. On juxtaposed portraits of Aeneas and Romulus in
a Pompeian wall-painting, taken to reflect the appearance of the statues in the
Forum Augusti, see Zanker (1988) 202.
[11] See Adams (1982) 179–80.
[12] For the sense and topographical significance of Ovid's expression, see Owen
(1924) 174–76 on *Tr.* 2.296.

Arachne (Book 6), which Rosati has discussed in the preceding chapter. Here it is enough to emphasize that the tale offers rich reflections on official interpretation of art. When Minerva chooses to depict her victory over Neptune in the two divinities' dispute over the naming of Athens, her tapestry, decorously ordered and balanced, promotes its didactic message with unavoidable clarity, while offering an aesthetic correlate to the power of enforcement that lies behind that message. Readers often side with the Arachne and her irreverent depiction of divine misbehavior; yet Minerva does not ask for our approval, nor need she take much thought for the judges of the contest. Her views of the story are enforceable and will determine the outcome of the plot. Her power allows her to impose her perspective on events.

Because the historical subjects of the later books of the *Metamorphoses* so often bring official interpretations within view, it is worth noting that, according to one political approach to literature currently in favor, only official interpretations are possible. On this view, all activity of writing and reading takes place within a fixed political system, often unrecognized by the participants, that "advances the interests" of "elites."[13] Proponents of this approach offer a powerfully reductive historicism: nothing is important about literature except the historically determined power-relationships that govern its production and reception; all attention to literary qualities of a text is sentimental and self-indulgent aestheticism.

Whereas this view contracts all understanding of literature to the narrowly political, some recent writers on history in Roman literature expand the historical to a larger field that embraces Varro's *theologia tripertita* and the universal history of Cornelius Nepos, Diodorus Siculus, and others.[14] In the shift, for instance, from mythological to historical subjects in the *Metamorphoses*, we can see a broad similarity to Varro's *De gente populi Romani*.[15] Wheeler's work on elements of universal history in the *Metamorphoses* shows that Ovid's awareness of historical principles is far deeper and more intimate than has been recognized before: for instance, the poem's "alternation between diachrony and synchrony is a narrative technique characteristic of

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[13] Habinek (1998) 3; see also Kennedy (1992) 26–58.
[14] On Varro see Lieberg (1973); on universal history Wheeler (1999) 125–28, and (2002).
[15] Wheeler (1999) 126.

universal history."[16] The poem's chronological framework from first origins to the present also reflects the aims of universal history; yet Wheeler, like most critics today, does not view the poem "as a natural process of evolution from chaos to cosmos, culminating in the peace and property of the Augustan age."[17] Arguing for a subtler and less overtly political patterning of events, he traces historical principles behind the increasingly historical subject matter of the last pentad. The movement from myth to history represents "a shift," in Wheeler's view, "from a *theologia fabulosa* to a *theologia civilis*."[18] The terms are Varronian, and invite us to contemplate the *Metamorphoses* alongside Varro's *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* (47 B.C.E.), a massive and comprehensive work, among whose aims was to organize conceptions of divinity into mythical, natural, and civic (Aug., *Civ. Dei* 6.5). Ovid is known to have used the *Antiquitates* as a source in the later books of the *Metamorphoses* as well as in the *Fasti*, and it is surely right to call attention to the presence of Varronian principles in Ovid's work. Yet Varro's conceptual organization does not structure Ovid's work, and Varro's religio-historical vision only partly informs Ovid's. Ovid brings Varro into the mix just as he does Augustan mythologizing and the historical mythologizing undertaken by his epic predecessors, especially Homer, Ennius, and Virgil. P. Hardie has recently argued for the presence of Livy in the *Metamorphoses*, arguing that Ovid's vision is fundamentally historical: "Ovid writes the long historical epic that Virgil self-consciously had abjured."[19] Recent emphasis on history in Ovid has much to teach us about the poet's intellectual depth and awareness of contemporary thought; yet it also runs the risk of presupposing a conceptual tidiness and order that Ovid's work in fact thwarts and defies. The historical vision of the *Metamorphoses* remains deeply fractured, stubbornly resistant to schematizing, and intentionally incoherent. Ovid acknowledges historical conceptions, but his work escapes their power to shape his material and to govern our responses to his text. Ovid's "historical" books are as strange, perverse, unpredictable, and provocative as the "fabulous" books that precede them.

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[16] Wheeler (2002).
[17] Wheeler (2000) 109.
[18] Wheeler (2000) 139–40.
[19] Hardie (2002).

2. From Trojan History to Natural History

In Book 11, the *Metamorphoses* suddenly becomes historical: "the 'historical' section actually begins at 11.194 with Laomedon's founding of Troy."[20] To be sure, the poem has pursued the course of history from the opening lines of Book 1, while, I have suggested, Romanization on both a large and small scale has kept contemporary reference, analogies, and allegorical interpretive options before our eyes throughout the progress of the work. Yet the foundation of Troy, which turns up as a narrative topic just after King Midas has received ass's ears, abruptly brings the poem's subject-matter within the boundaries of history. As Kenney notes, "For the ancients, in so far as a distinction was made between history and myth, the Trojan War tended to mark the dividing line. This, with its aftermath, occupies the next three books [11–13]."[21] Because, however, Rome's origins are in Troy, Book 11 also begins a narrative sequence that continues to the end of the poem, and indeed to the moment of reading for Ovid's Roman audience. In the last pentad, Books 11–15, "mythical" tales continue unabated, but now jostle with tales from Roman history and even "current events," all brought within the narrative sweep. Among "current events" we may locate the transformation of Julius Caesar's soul into a star near the end of Book 15. Yet this transformation is thoroughly mythologized, for it occurs among the activities of the goddess Venus.

With Troy's foundation, history arrives well integrated into the poem's patterns of mythological narrative. We might expect that linearity and clarity of narrative progress would arrive along with historical subjects, and indeed the last pentad is sometimes described as if this were the case. Wilkinson writes, "When we reach Laomedon's Troy (11, 194) the principle of chronological sequence takes charge again: it is 'after that' rather than 'meanwhile' that sustains the illusion of reality."[22] But Wilkinson's impression is in fact illusory. The amount of material recounted by internal narrators steadily increases in the later books,[23] so that chronological movement is constantly interrupted and postponed by tales of the past, recent or remote.

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[20] Coleman (1971) 472 n. 1.
[21] Kenney (1986) 439.
[22] Wilkinson (1978) 238.
[23] See Wheeler (1999) 162–63, and Rosati, chapter 9 above.

Even more remarkable is the fact that history arrives together with manifest anachronism. It is often noted that the participation of Hercules in the foundation of Troy—his rescue of Hesione and his capture of the city after Laomedon refuses him the promised horses (11.212–15)—occurs some 1400 lines after the hero's death and apotheosis in Book 9 (134–272): "Ovid makes no attempt to reconcile the chronology."[24] Wheeler has explored Ovid's anachronisms in revealing detail, showing that at Hercules' death in Book 9, "Troy is assumed to exist already in the world of the poem," and that "Ovid could have avoided the anachronism by placing stories about the dead and deified Hercules in the mouths of characters who report retrospective events in inset narratives that temporarily suspend the main chronological thread."[25] Instead, Ovid flaunts his disruption of chronology, first recounting Hercules' death and apotheosis, then introducing a narrator, Alcmene, mother of Hercules, to recount his birth (9.273–323). In Book 9, chronology appears to reverse direction, but at Book 11 chronological dislocation turns out to be more complex than simple reversal. Wheeler's conclusions refute the common notion that Ovid's shift to historical topics results in a more linear narrative explication and greater chronological regularity:

> The reintroduction of Hercules in Book 11 is therefore part and parcel of a larger web of anachronism involving the foundation of Troy and the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, both of which should have occurred already in the poem's historical continuum. It should be clear, furthermore, that Ovid's transpositions of the foundation of Troy and the marriage of Peleus and Thetis are a deliberate structural strategy to furnish new points of origin for the narrative of the final books of the poem. That is, Ovid deliberately violates his earlier chronological scheme to provide new beginning points for the final pentad (i.e., from the foundation of Troy and the birth of Achilles to the present).[26]

As a result, the formality and regularity of the pentadic structure produces a paradoxical result: on the one hand, it divides the work symmetrically into thirds and hence to some extent structures the experience of the reader: we may compare the division of Virgil's *Aeneid* into halves, in allusive reference to the *Odyssey* (1–6) and *Iliad* (7–12).[27] On the other hand, in effecting a new beginning for the

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[24] Kenney (1986) 439.
[25] Wheeler (1999) 137, 136.
[26] Wheeler (1999) 138.
[27] See Servius on *Aen.* 7.1.

last pentad, Ovid reinforces the narrative indirection and unpredictability that have characterized the *Metamorphoses* from its beginning.

The tales that follow the foundation of Troy both illuminate and obscure the newly initiated narrative patterns of the last pentad. At this point, Ovid's readers may expect him to expand upon the origins of the Trojan conflict. He does so in his account of Peleus and Thetis, the parents of Achilles, but hastily summarizes the elements of the story that are traditionally the most important: Thetis receives a prophecy that she will bear a son who will surpass his father; Jupiter, despite his passion, avoids mating with Thetis "lest the universe contain anything greater than Jupiter" (*ne quicquam mundus Ioue maius haberet*, 11.224). Ovid alters the authority for the prophecy, substituting the shape-shifting divinity Proteus for Themis as its source.[28] He then develops the story in his own way, dwelling upon a description of the bay frequented by Thetis, Peleus's attempt to assault her (which she thwarts by shape-shifting), Proteus's advice to Peleus that he tie her up as she sleeps, and the successful results. Some of this account will remind us of epic predecessors, for Proteus is familiar from the *Odyssey* (4.384–470) as well as from a brief appearance earlier in the *Metamorphoses* (8.732–37), and from Virgil's *Georgics* (4.387–453). Yet in emphasizing shape-shifting and sexual assault, Ovid flaunts the unedifying nature of his account and its lack of relevance to any of the large-scale themes, providential, historical, and originary, that one might expect at the threshhold of events that lead to the foundation of Rome. An account of origins this may be, with reference to historical subjects, and formally analogous to Virgil's reworking of Homeric material in the *Aeneid*; yet Ovid offers it manifestly without the interpretive guidance that would associate it with Virgilian themes. As an account of origins, it explores causes of the Trojan War still more remote than those developed by Ovid's predecessors, suggesting a line of interpretation that traces events back to lust, violence, and deception at least as much as to beneficent destiny.

In the rest of Book 11, Ovid on the one hand traces Trojan subject matter from its origins, and on the other characteristically takes his narrative into unforeseen directions. The tales of Daedalion and his daughter Chione and of Ceyx and Alcyone are intricately linked to the matter of Troy; yet in them Ovid pursues free-wheeling digressive

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[28] Themis: Pindar, *Isthm.* 8.32.

variety that is entirely consistent with the earlier books of the *Meta-morphoses*, in no way more linear, predictable, or goal-directed than formerly.

At the end of Book 11, Troy, chronology, and fate turn up in another tale of amorous pursuit. Ovid attaches his tale of Aesacus, a son of Priam first known from Ovid's version, to that of Ceyx and Alcyone, whose unhappy tale of fidelity and loss has long occupied our attention. Observing the royal couple, now transformed to kingfishers, near the shore, an old man and his neighbor shift their conversation to another sea-bird, the diver, who likewise turns out to have a human history and even royal lineage. In a send-up of learned claims to poetic authority,[29] Ovid's narrator cannot tell us which of the two interlocutors is the source for the story: *proximus, aut idem, si fors tulit... dixit* (11.751). The irony of this crisis of authority is especially marked by the genealogical king-list that follows, which approaches annalistic, even inscriptional style:

> et si descendere ad ipsum
> ordine perpetuo quaeris, sunt huius origo
> Ilus et Assaracus raptusque Ioui Ganymedes
> Laomedonue senex Priamusque nouissima Troiae
> tempora sortitus. frater fuit Hectoris iste:
> qui nisi sensisset prima noua fata iuuenta
> forsitan inferius non Hectore nomen haberet (11.754–60).

> And if you wish to follow his lineage down to him in continuous sequence, his ancestors were Ilus, Assaracus, Ganymede, seized by Jupiter, and Priam, allotted Troy's last days. That bird there was Hector's brother. If he had not experienced a strange fate in early youth, perhaps he would have no less a name than Hector's.

Ovid appears simultaneously to claim and to obscure authority for the tale. To complete the paradox, he refers to the king-list as *ordo perpetuus* (755), "a continuous list": thus the pretensions of his *carmen perpetuum* to be a universal history, conducted in unbroken sequence from first beginnings to the present, serve to introduce a tale of admittedly indeterminate origin.

The tale that follows is primarily a natural aetiology, incorporating both historical and epic subjects into an account of how Hector's brother became the origin of a species of sea-bird. Aesacus chases

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[29] See Rosati, chapter 9, above.

Hesperie, who in her hasty flight steps on a snake, Eurydice-like, and dies of its bite. Her pursuer is introduced as hating cities and devoted to rural life, yet unrustic in his susceptibility to love: *non agreste tamen nec inexpugnabile amori/pectus habens* (11.767–68). *Amor agrestis* is not uncommon in the *Metamorphoses* and will soon be fully developed in the tale of Polyphemus (13.750–897). What is unusual in Aesacus are his guilt and remorse at Hesperie's death:

> uulnus ab angue
> a me causa data est. ego sum sceleratior illo,
> qui tibi morte mea mortis solacia mittam. (11.780–82)

> The wound was given by the snake, the cause by me. I committed a greater crime than the snake, and will send you consolation for your death by my own.

When he throws himself from a cliff, the sea-goddess Tethys pities him and transforms him into the diver: the verb *mergitur* (795) at the end of the story echoes the noun *mergus* (753) at its beginning. Thus, the whole story is framed as an aetiology of the bird's name, and so establishes a link between the history of Troy and the origins of the natural world. Trojan history, along with all notions of historical progress to the glorious present, becomes naturalized and incorporated into aetiological explication; natural phenomena, meanwhile, receive a history, and suggest that an historicized understanding of nature is possible.[30]

3. *Aeneas, Romulus, and Hersilia*

Natural aetiologies are prominent in Ovid's integration of Trojan subjects into the *Metamorphoses*. As he introduces more Roman subjects and Roman heroes into his narrative, his aetiological focus turns from the earth to the heavens. The poem's first apotheosis is that of Hercules in Book 9; a sequence of apotheoses and catasterisms follows. Near the end of Book 15, after Jupiter has promised Venus to make the soul of her descendant, Julius Caesar, into a star, she, although unable to prevent Caesar's murder, snatches the soul from

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[30] On aetiological explication in the *Metamorphoses*, see the comprehensive work of Myers (1994a).

his limbs and carries it to the heavens. There, having become a star, it rejoices to see its own deeds outdone by those of Augustus (15.840–51). When Augustus forbids his own deeds to be preferred to his father's, personified Fama reappears to thwart him:

> hic sua praeferri quamquam uetat acta paternis,
> libera fama tamen nullisque obnoxia iussis
> inuitum praefert unaque in parte repugnat. (15.852–54)

> Although he forbids his own deeds to be preferred to his father's, nevertheless Fame, free and not yielding to any commands, prefers him against his will, defying him in this matter only.

To attribute *modestia* to a ruler is standard in panegyric, and equally standard are the *exempla* that follow;[31] but because these lines appear in the *Metamorphoses*, they invite multiple perspectives on the events described. Readers are already familiar with Fama as the source of "lies mixed with truth," which issue from her echoing house, and have met her also as "the herald of truth," offering an accurate prophecy about the royal succession among Rome's early kings: *destinat imperio clarum praenuntia ueri/fama Numam* (15.3–4). Later in Book 15, Pythagoras claims Fama as his authority for predicting the rise of Rome: '*nunc quoque Dardaniam fama est consurgere Romam*' (15.431).

To be sure, any claims of truth for Fama are problematic in the *Metamorphoses*. The identification of Fama as *praenuntia ueri* occurs in a context of manifest anachronism, the irony of which would have been obvious to Ovid's Roman readers. The succession of Numa, the second king of Rome, was an accepted part of the historical record; but Ovid's readers knew well that the tradition of his visit to Croton as a student of Pythagoras was chronologically impossible. As Wheeler observes, "Cicero (*Rep.* 2.28–29; *Tusc.* 4.2) and Livy (1.18.2–5) point out that Pythagoras did not come to Italy until the fourth year of the reign of Tarquinius Superbus (c.530 B.C.), 140 years after Numa's death. The Ovidian narrator, however, exploits the audience's awareness of the anachronism to launch one of the greatest non-events of the poem."[32]

After Fama's appearance in the tale of Numa, her recurrence as an agent in the tale of Caesar's soul exemplifies the ambiguous nature

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[31] See Bömer *Met.* 7:482–83 on 15.852.

[32] Wheeler (1999) 127. On the problematic nature of Fama, see also Hardie (1997) 193–95.

of the politically charged episodes at the end of the *Metamorphoses*. Few passages in the work provoke such widely divergent views as the apotheosis of Caesar's soul, and all of them, I would maintain, can find support in Ovid's text and are in fact generated by it: that Ovid introduces the apotheosis and Augustan panegyric "in all seriousness," and "employs the official terminology in an entirely loyal fashion";[33] that this material is ridiculous, satirical, even subversive. My own view is that it is intentionally incoherent, presenting the reader with irreconcilable interpretive options. Certainly there is a striking dichotomy in modern critical positions taken on whether the apotheosis is integral to the larger work or loosely added as extraneous matter. According to Galinsky, "The eulogy of Augustus and the account of Julius Caesar's apotheosis are not the organic end of a persistent thematic development." Wheeler maintains the opposite position: "It should be evident from the numerous examples of apotheosis in the *Metamorphoses* that Julius Caesar's catasterism is the repetition of a common tale-type, which is associated with the end of narrative sequences, books, and pentads, and the poem as a whole."[34]

When we turn to consider the apotheoses of Aeneas and Romulus in Book 14, we find that they prepare for and introduce not only the apotheosis itself of Caesar's soul, but also the interpretive questions it raises. At 14.441 Ovid resumes the engagement with Virgil's *Aeneid* that he had begun, and intermittently pursued, in the preceding book.[35] Ovid takes over from Virgil the burial of Aeneas's nurse Caieta as an initiatory gesture: in the *Aeneid* it begins Book 7, and Ovid's version of *Aeneid* 7–12 begins here, too. Ovid adds an epitaph for Caieta: *hic me Caietam notae pietatis alumnus/ereptam Argolico quo debuit igne cremauit* (14.443–44). By emphasizing Caieta's rescue from one fire and cremation by another, Ovid calls attention to an etymological explanation of her name from καίειν, glossed by *cremare*. Thereby Ovid alludes "to the derivation that Virgil omitted," as O'Hara notes.[36] Ovid is in a sense commenting on Virgil's text,

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[33] Börner *Met.* 7:453–54 on 15.745; 7:250 on 15.1.

[34] Galinsky (1975) 253; Wheeler (2000) 139, and similarly 143: "the Caesar episode . . . participates in the poem's dynamics of repetition and continuity as much as any other episode."

[35] On Ovid's little *Aeneid* see Tissol (1993), (1997) 177–91; Hinds (1998) 107–19.

[36] O'Hara (1996) 268. Hinds (1998) 108, on another Ovidian rewriting, notes "the air of editorial comment."

noting an etymology that would later find a place also in Servius's commentary on the *Aeneid*.[37] Another effect of Ovid's revision is to fill out the earlier account, suggesting that there is more to the story than what Virgil provides.

There follows a severely abridged summary of Books 7–11 of the *Aeneid*. After Aeneas's arrival, the subsequent war in Latium up to Venulus's embassy to Diomedes requires only nine lines (14.450–58). Ovid here resumes his earlier procedure in retelling the *Aeneid*: most of Virgil's work he reduces to brief, sometimes comically abbreviated, summary; he also adds many tales not in Virgil. In parallel fashion, Ovid had earlier refashioned the *Iliad*, expanding the inset tale of the Lapiths and Centaurs to great length, and adding two tales not in Homer's account: a nearly inconclusive struggle between Achilles and the invulnerable Cygnus (12.63–167), and a verbal battle, the debate over the arms of Achilles (13.1–398); in both of them, Homeric heroism becomes attenuated until it is barely noticeable. Ovid now reworks two tales from the *Aeneid* that had offered accounts of transformation: the companions of Diomedes, transformed to seabirds (*Aen.* 11.271–74; *Met.* 14.494–509), and Aeneas's ships, transformed to nymphs (*Aen.* 9.77–122; *Met.* 14.546–65).[38] In Ovid's account, the first of these becomes a tale of unequal justice typical of the *Metamorphoses*, though thematically remote from the *Aeneid*: Acmon, recounting the miseries that Diomedes' crew has endured at the hands of Venus, impiously provokes her (*Met.* 14.486–95). *Dicta placent paucis* (*Met.* 14.496), "his words please few" of his comrades; but Venus punishes both Acmon and those who opposed him with arbitrary transformation. Her power is amply demonstrated; yet the lesson of the tale remains at best ambiguous, and its conclusion seems to transfer its uncertainties into the visual sphere. These are *uolucres dubiae*, and any attempt to identify them must remain frustrated: '*si, uolucrum quae sit dubiarum forma, requiris,/ut non cygnorum, sic albis proxima cygnis*' (*Met.* 14.508–9).

The alternating pattern of severe abbreviation and vast expansion of Virgilian material provides a context for the apotheosis of Aeneas, an event foretold but not narrated in the *Aeneid*. Jupiter begins his consolatory prophecy to Venus in *Aeneid* 1 by mentioning the foun-

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[37] Servius on *Aen.* 7.1: *unde Caieta dicta est*, ἀπὸ τοῦ καίειν.

[38] On the ships transformed to nymphs see Fantham (1990).

dation of Lavinium and Aeneas's apotheosis. Both are assurances that fate and Jupiter's established plans have not changed:

> parce metu, Cytherea, manent immota tuorum
> fata tibi; cernes urbem et promissa Lauini
> moenia, sublimemque feres ad sidera caeli
> magnanimum Aenean; neque me sententia uertit. (*Aen.* 1.257–60)

> Cease from fear, Cytherea: your fates remain for you unmoved. You will see the city and promised walls of Lavinium, and you will carry aloft great-souled Aeneas to the constellations of heaven; my decision has not changed.

Jupiter's prophecy, which at this point already has passed well beyond the plot of the *Aeneid,* embraces all Rome's fortunes within a reassuring teleological vision. Among the events prophesied is the reconciliation of Juno with the Romans, which is to prove important both for the *Aeneid* and for Ovid's recontextualization of Virgilian topics:

> quin aspera Iuno,
> quae mare nunc terrasque metu caelumque fatigat,
> consilia in melius referet, mecumque fouebit
> Romanos, rerum dominos gentemque togatam. (*Aen.* 1.279–82)

> Furthermore, harsh Juno, who now wears out sea, earth, and heaven with fear, will turn her plans to a better course: along with me she will cherish the Romans, lords of all, the people of the toga.

We ought better to call this not *the* but *a* reconciliation, for, introduced after Jupiter's mention of Romulus and the foundation of Rome, it appears not to refer to the reconciliation that actually occurs in *Aeneid* 12. There, shortly before the final encounter of Aeneas and Turnus, Jupiter appeals to Juno to give up her wrath; she does so, stipulating that the Latins not be required to give up their language and dress, and that Troy remain fallen (*Aen.* 12.791–842). In *Aeneid* 1, however, Virgil follows Ennius's *Annales* in dating Juno's reconciliation to the time of the second Punic War, Ennius's own subject, as Servius notes on the words *consilia in melius referet: quia bello Punico secundo, ut ait Ennius, placata Iuno coepit fauere Romanis* (*Ann.* 8.16 Skutsch).[39] Virgil mentions the chronologically later reconciliation long before describing the former. In Book 1 Jupiter takes a longer view of destiny, showing that a conflict introduced but unresolved in the *Aeneid,*

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[39] Cf. also Servius on *Aen.* 12.841: *constat bello Punico secundo exoratam Iunonem.*

the future hostility of Carthage, will eventually be resolved happily. Whether we take Juno's reconciliation in *Aeneid* 12 to be incomplete, impermanent, or, as Feeney concludes, limited to only some of Juno's grudges,[40] it contributes only a partial sense of closure to the end of Virgil's poem.

Ovid's transformation of Aeneas into the divine Indiges more specifically recalls *Aeneid* 12 than *Aeneid* 1, especially the beginning of Jupiter's address to Juno at *Aen.* 12.794–95: '*indigetem Aenean scis ipsa et scire fateris/deberi caelo fatisque ad sidera tolli.*' Ovid does not closely follow the chronology of Juno's reconciliation in *Aeneid* 12, however, shifting it instead to a time beyond Vergil's plot, and just preceding the apotheosis of Aeneas, which indeed it serves to introduce:

> iamque deos omnes ipsamque Aeneia uirtus
> Iunonem ueteres finire coegerat iras,
> cum bene fundatis opibus crescentis Iuli
> tempestiuus erat caelo Cythereius heros. (14.581–84)

> And now Aeneas's virtue had compelled all the gods, even Juno her-
> self, to put an end to old anger, when the resources of rising Iulus
> were well established, and the hero, Venus's son, was ripe for heaven.

The thoughts and language strongly recall the *Aeneid*, but Ovid introduces these lines into bizarre, surreal surroundings of his own making. Their immediate context is one of the strangest transformations in the poem—the tale of Turnus's hometown, Ardea, changed into the heron. Turnus and the town Ardea may be Virgilian in their associations, but Ovid's treatment is remote from Virgil, and takes his own aetiological procedure to new extremes. It is typical of Ovid's natural aetiologies that they account for the first animal of a species, *tum primum cognita praepes* (14.576), and that they stress the continuity of traits and features in the change from the old to the new shape. This case goes beyond the typical in the sheer imaginative effort required to make the shift from a ruined city, with all its attributes, to a heron. Cities, as human social organizations, are characteristically distinct from the natural; this is not just any city, but one embedded in the human history of Rome and Rome's enemies, and familiar in Rome's national epic. Yet Ardea retains even its name in its migration into the avian realm as the first heron:

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[40] Feeney (1984) 184.

et sonus et macies et pallor et omnia, captam
quae deceant urbem, nomen quoque mansit in illa
urbis et ipsa suis deplangitur Ardea pennis. (14.578–80)

It had the sound, the wasted condition, the pallor—everything that
befits a conquered city; even the city's name remained in the bird,
and Ardea beats her breast, in mourning for herself, with her own
wings.

These remarkable lines, which immediately precede the apotheosis
of Aeneas, provide no contextual introduction to the apotheosis, no
invitation to form a close approximation of Ovid's and Virgil's Aeneas.
Aeneas and his *uirtus* abruptly arrive at 582; yet no sooner do the
gods and Juno give up their wrath, introducing a new and impres-
sive array of literary, historical, and political associations, than the
tone of Ovid's version of the apotheosis becomes intrusively comic.
Venus canvasses the gods like a Roman politician: *ambieratque Venus
superos* (14.585).[41] She appeals to Jupiter's grandfatherly pride, and
seems to treat *numen* as a rare and valuable commodity in begging
some of it for her son, '*quamuis parvum des, optime, numen,/dummodo des
aliquod*' (14.589–90). All these details are at least potentially comic,
as is the argument—wholly successful in the event—with which Venus
concludes her speech. One trip to hell is enough: '*satis est inamabile
regnum/adspexisse semel, Stygios semel isse per amnes*' (14.590–91). These
lines are a comic correction of Virgil.[42] Later readers were to be dis-
tressed that Virgil's Sibyl, otherwise a knowledgeable prophetess, was
unaware of Aeneas's apotheosis, which Jupiter had explicitly proph-
esied in Book 1 and was to prophesy again in Book 12. Otherwise
she would not have assumed a second trip for Aeneas to the infer-
nal regions after his death:

quod si tantus amor menti, si tanta cupido
bis Stygios innare lacus, *bis* nigra uidere
Tartara, et insano iuuat indulgere labori,
accipe quae peragenda prius. (*Aen.* 6.133–36)

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[41] Feeney (1991) 207: "Yet Venus 'canvasses' the gods, as does Hercules in the
Apocolocyntosis: the author of that skit knew exactly what he was about when he
inserted his splendid joke on Claudius's apotheosis being added as a footnote to
the *Metamorphoses*, for he thereby declares the basis of his and Ovid's procedure to
be the same parody of senatorial procedure (*Apoc.* 9)."

[42] On "correction" of Virgil see Thomas (1986), Zetzel (1989), Finkelpearl (1990)
340, Martindale (1993) 45, Feldherr (1999).

But if your mind has so great a longing, so great a desire to swim
the Stygian pools twice, twice to look upon dark Tartarus, and it
pleases you to indulge in an insane effort, learn what must be accom-
plished first.

Servius tries to reconcile the death of Aeneas, implied here, with
Ovid's apotheosis of him, though he could have mentioned Jupiter's
two prophecies in the *Aeneid* itself; Servius proposes that *simulacra* of
apotheosized heroes, no less than of ordinary folk, are to be found
in the underworld.[43] We do not know whether readers and critics
in Ovid's time were already vexed about the Sibyl's evident lack of
knowledge,[44] but Ovid's Venus, correcting *bis* with *semel,* sets the
record straight.

Once Venus has asked the help of the river Numicius in wash-
ing away all that is mortal in Aeneas, she completes the process of
making him into a divinity "whom Quirinus's crowd calls Indiges,
and has received with altars and a temple" (*quem turba Quirini/nun-
cupat Indigetem temploque arisque recepit,* 14.607–8). This information is
profoundly historical, for how Romans understand the altars and
temples of their gods, how they connect the remote to the recent
past, depends on the symbolic narrative or narratives that their minds
associate with monuments in their city. Ovid's revision of Vergil is
the revision of a well known and compelling historical vision. Ovid's
concluding lines on Aeneas also, as editors note, offer a parallel to
the language of an inscription for a statue of Aeneas found at Pompeii:
appel[latus]q.est Indigens [pa]ter et in deo[rum n]umero relatus (*CIL* 1².189.1 =
Dessau 63).[45]

Mention of the *turba Quirini* looks forward to the apotheosis of
Romulus later in Book 14, but first there intervenes a king-list—an
annalistic structuring of the past remarkable in finding a place in
the *Metamorphoses.* Like the renaming of Aeneas, the list of Latin kings
(14.609–22) also recalls to Roman readers their reading of inscrip-
tions.[46] This king-list also recalls earlier lists in the *Metamorphoses,* such
as the genealogy of Aesacus. His transformation is a natural aetiology,

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[43] Servius on *bis Stygios innare lacus: modo et post mortem. quod autem dicit Ouidius,
Aeneam inter deos relatum, non mirum est. nam ut supra etiam diximus, necesse est etiam rela-
torum inter deos apud inferos esse simulacra: ut Herculis, Liberi patris, Castoris et Pollucis.*

[44] On prophetic unawareness in general, see O'Hara (1990); on inconsistencies
in prophecy esp. 27–33, 123–27, 141–47.

[45] See Bömer *Met.* 7:154–55 on 14.445; Degrassi (1937) #85.

[46] Haupt-Ehwald on *Met.* 14.609 cite the *elogia* in the Forum Augusti in con-
nection with this king-list.

and likewise Aeneas's shift to divine status as Indiges can be viewed as just another transformation, an addition to the tale of Ardea transformed into a heron. We might almost think of it as an undifferentiated item in a vast accumulation of transformation-tales that could be arbitrarily lengthened by further addition. The reason, however, that we cannot quite do so is the fact that it is not isolated, but participates in a pattern of apotheoses. The apotheosis of Hercules in Book 9 establishes a pattern that is reinforced strongly by the apotheoses of Romulus and of Julius Caesar's soul. Their greater number toward the end of the poem appears to signal both their own importance and their closural impact.[47]

Ovid's list of Latin kings does not lead directly to the apotheosis of Romulus, but to the tale of Pomona and Vertumnus, which he dates to the reign of Proca (14.623). Myers argues that the tale is rich in closural features,[48] cut from the same cloth as the apotheoses that frame it. Viewed as an incident of deceptive seduction and barely-suppressed violence, the tale of Vertumnus can also appear a distraction, leading the reader's attention away from the transformation of historically important heroes into gods. Johnson views the tale positively as a "romantic comedy," yet regards it as compromising its context: "It is no secret that it disrupts what might be called the Aeneadization of what is otherwise far from being a Roman epic just when it begins to show promise (or make fraudulent promises) of turning a new leaf and beginning to be such an epic, and one in the Augustan mode to boot." Johnson concludes that, coming as it does between Aeneas and Romulus, the tale of Vertumnus defeats closure and "deflates any last hope of the poem's imagining Roman Historical Destiny (or imagining the World's destiny as Rome's) because an ample and effective representation of the myth of Romulus would be crucial to a celebration of Rome's place at the end of history as the end of history."[49]

When Ovid abruptly returns to his long-interrupted king-list at 14.772, he remarkably fails to mention Romulus: Rome's walls are founded in the passive voice, and only Romulus's enemy, the Sabine king Tatius, receives mention by name:

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[47] Wheeler (2000) 152 describes the concentration of apotheoses toward the end of the poem as a closural gesture.

[48] Myers (1994b).

[49] Johnson (1997) 373–74.

proximus Ausonias iniusti miles Amuli
rexit opes, Numitorque senex amissa nepotis
munere regna capit, festisque Palilibus urbis
moenia conduntur. Tatiusque patresque Sabini
bella gerunt. (14.772-76)

Next the military might of unjust Amulius ruled rich Ausonia; old
Numitor received, by his grandson's gift, the kingdom that he had lost;
on the festival of Pales the city's walls are founded. Tatius and the
Sabine fathers wage war.

Scholars have attempted to explain by various means "Ovid's dras-
tic compression of Rome's origins," as Wheeler remarks. Bömer sug-
gests that Ovid wants to avoid repeating what he writes in the *Fasti*;
Granobs, that the foundation of Rome offers no opportunity for
metamorphosis, although Helenus is to represent Rome's foundation
exactly in such terms later, in another context, in Book 15 (434–35);
Wheeler's own suggestion is that Ovid wishes to avoid competing
with Ennius's account in the *Annales*.[50] These explanations themselves
are speculative, but the text seems to call for explanation because
Ovid has so strikingly omitted an obvious opportunity to serve up
an account of Rome's origins. Ovid's critics easily fall into the poet's
hermeneutic trap: his text demands interpretation without providing
the resources to arrive at one. Romulus and his apotheosis are an
especially impressive instance of the self-consciously missed opportu-
nity, the Ovidian narrative tease. Because Romulus was so well-
known to Ovid's Roman readers as a mythico-historical parallel to
Augustus, few topics are richer in potential for allegorical exploita-
tion and panegyric symbolism; and this potential goes almost totally
unrealized here.

Ovid's approach to Romulus is no approach at all: he omits the
founder's exploits and shifts all attention to the divine sphere. The
apotheosis of Romulus and, as it turns out, that of his wife Hersilia
result from divine actions, whose description is the province of myth.
Historians who record their exploits give them standing as histori-
cal figures; deprived of exploits, they re-enter myth. By remytholo-
gizing history Ovid incorporates it into the world of the *Metamorphoses*,
in which divinities are active and humans largely are acted upon.
He also opposes euhemeristic modes of interpreting the shift from
mortal to divinity, in accordance with which a human's heroic actions
approach and approximate the divine, resulting in the hero's ven-

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[50] Bömer *Met.* 7:231 on 14.772–74; Granobs (1997) 108–9; Wheeler (2000) 113.

eration as divine by other humans, and his reception among the divinities as one of them. Book 1 of Ennius's historical epic, the *Annales*, reports that at Romulus's death he now has a life among the gods: *Romulus in caelo cum dis genitalibus aeuom/degit* (1.62 Skutsch). Ennius probably took a euhemeristic interpretation of Romulus's deification, one aptly summarized by Skutsch: "virtue and political merit open the gates of heaven."[51] "It is highly likely," as Feeney writes, "that the deification of Romulus, who performed the mighty benefaction of founding the city, was the innovation of Ennius. Ennius here will have been placing Romulus in the tradition of the great Hellenistic monarchs who won immortality by emulating Hercules."[52] Although the details of Ennius's account are far from clear, Ovid's non-euhemeristic approach is apparently the reverse of his principal source, the original and canonical version of Romulus's deification.[53]

History appears to be going backwards as the divine agents in the Romans' war with Tatius take action. Juno unlocks the gate to the invading Sabines despite having so recently (only two hundred lines earlier, 581–84) given up her wrath against the Romans:

> inde sati Curibus tacitorum more luporum
> ore premunt uoces et corpora uicta sopore
> inuadunt portasque petunt, quas obice firmo
> clauserat Iliades; unam tamen ipsa reclusit
> nec strepitum uerso Saturnia cardine fecit. (14.778–82)

> Then the Sabines, born at Cures, keep their voices muffled like silent wolves; they assault the Romans, whose bodies are sunk in slumber; they seek the gates, which Ilia's son [Romulus] had barred; yet one of them Saturnian Juno unlocked. She made no noise as she turned it on its hinge.

After all the emphasis on Juno's reconciliation earlier, in the apotheosis of Aeneas, her behavior here is glaringly inconsistent. We may try to rationalize Juno's actions by appealing to Ennius's historical framework, by which Juno gives up her wrath at the second Punic War. But Ovid makes no attempt to clarify and so rescue historical consistency; indeed, he appears to mock the tradition of multiple

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[51] Skutsch (1985) 260 ad loc.

[52] Feeney (1991) 122–23.

[53] Schmitzer (1990) views Ovid's presentation of several gods and heroes in the *Metamorphoses* as euhemeristic allegory. He draws parallels, for instance, between Cadmus and Augustus, Bacchus and Augustus, and Hercules and Augustus. The running head for this section is "Heroes as Prototypes of Rulers." Ovid's Aeneas and Romulus allow Schmitzer little scope for this approach; see 250–51.

reconciliations of Juno, exploiting it for its comic absurdity. There are serious consequences as well: the equation of history with destiny breaks down.

Soon Juno will be favorable to the Romans once again at the apotheosis of Hersilia, but meanwhile two other divinities intervene: first Venus, unable to undo Juno's hostile act in unbarring the gate, entreats the Naiads living next to Janus's shrine in the Forum Romanum to come to her assistance. Their spring, normally cold, they bring to a hasty boil, thus blocking the way to the Sabines and allowing the Romans time to arm themselves. Next, Mars addresses Jupiter, requesting deification for Romulus as the fulfillment, now due, of a long-standing promise. Mars cites Jupiter's original words, representing them as an exact quotation:

> tu mihi concilio quondam praesente deorum
> (nam memoro memorique animo pia uerba notaui)
> "unus erit, quem tu tolles in caerula caeli"
> dixisti: rata sit uerborum summa tuorum! (14.812–15)

> Once, at an assembled council of the gods, you told me (for I remember, and marked the pious words in my retentive mind), 'there will be one whom you will carry to the blue of heaven.' Let the content of your words be fulfilled!

The words Mars quotes appear to gain even more authority by referential confirmation from outside the text of the *Metamorphoses*—doubly cited, as it were: for while Mars cites Jupiter, Ovid cites Ennius's *Annales* (1.33 Skutsch). Readers of Ovid's contemporary *Fasti* will remember the recurrence of Ennius's line in a third context, for Mars cites it there as part of a parallel appeal for Romulus's deification (*F.* 2.487). Although Mars describes his son to Jupiter as the latter's "worthy grandson" (*Met.* 14.810), Romulus's exploits have no part in the appeal. Deification results directly from Jupiter's promise, so strongly emphasized, and at the beginning of the speech Mars needs only to establish that now is the time for its fulfillment:

> tempus adest, genitor, quoniam fundamine magno
> res Romana ualet nec praeside pendet ab uno,
> praemia (sunt promissa mihi dignoque nepoti)
> soluere et ablatum terris inponere caelo. (14.808–11)[54]

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[54] In *Met.* 14.809 Anderson reads *et* for *nec*, following most mss.; most other editors, following N. Heinsius, prefer *nec*. See the parallel speech of Mars to Jupiter at *F.* 2.483–84.

Since, father, Roman affairs are well established on great foundations, and do not depend on a single protector, it is time to pay the reward— it was promised to me and to my worthy grandson—to remove him from the earth and to place him in heaven.

In all this there is no mention of Romulus's great benefactions, such as might sustain a euhemeristic interpretation of the hero's advancement to divine status. Far from avoiding comparison to Ennius, Ovid ostentatiously quotes his predecessor's work, as if to flaunt the fact that in stripping the hero of exploits he has eliminated Ennius's interpretation of them. Ennius's words, transferred to so un-Ennian a context, may appear well suited to a familiar allegorical parallel, reminding Roman readers once again of their second Romulus, likewise destined for the skies.[55] Yet Ovid's apotheosis of Romulus functions but feebly as an Augustan icon precisely because of its lack of historical specificity: lacking *res gestae*, Ovid's Romulus offers readers little to go on in drawing conceptual parallels to the achievements of Augustus.

There are many similarities between the apotheosis of Romulus in the *Metamorphoses* and that in the *Fasti*: in both works Ovid makes an emphatic identification of deified Romulus with Quirinus, reinforcing relatively recent developments in the story;[56] in both he quotes the line from Ennius and repeats the apostrophe *Romule, iura dabas* (*Met.* 14.806, *F.* 2.492) at the moment when the apotheosis occurs. Yet in their larger contexts the two passages are remarkably dissimilar: while in the *Metamorphoses* Romulus's apotheosis is his whole story—simply one in a series of apotheoses extending from Hercules to the end of the work—in the *Fasti* his apotheosis has a context in the life and exploits of the hero. Romulus appears so often in the *Fasti* that, as Barchiesi notes, the episodes concerning him "are numerous enough to trace out a biography of him, even if by installments"; Ovid's "version of the Roman year gives Romulus an unprecedented amount of space, far beyond the "natural" occasions offered by tradition (such as, for example, Romulus's involvement in the foundation myths or in the actual rituals of the Parilia or the Lupercalia)."[57]

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[55] On political exploitation of Romulus-Quirinus during the republic see Classen (1962), Burkert (1962); in the Augustan period Alföldi (1951), Jocelyn (1989).

[56] On Romulus and Quirinus see Barchiesi (1994) 102–4 = (1997b) 113–14.

[57] Barchiesi (1994) 132 = (1997b) 144, 143.

In an allegorical discussion of Aeneas and Augustus, Binder writes, "The identification of Augustus with Romulus even to the point of his apotheosis demanded a 'positive' picture of Romulus."[58] If, as Barchiesi suggests, the violence and ruthlessness of Romulus's exploits in the *Fasti* make him a problematic parallel to Augustus,[59] we may suppose that Ovid gives himself an easier task in the *Metamorphoses* by keeping Romulus's deeds out of his narrative. In the *Fasti*, for instance, Mars mentions Romulus's dead brother Remus—always a difficulty in positive portrayals of the founder—whereas in the *Metamorphoses* Mars prudently omits any mention of Remus. Yet even the attenuated Romulus of the *Metamorphoses* presents difficulties to allegorical interpretation. As we saw earlier, Mars explains that it is now time for apotheosis because Rome's condition, now well-established, "does not depend on a single protector" (*nec praeside pendet ab uno*, *Met.* 14.809); hence, Romulus can be safely removed from the earth. Applied to Augustus, this remark makes a poor allegorical fit: it calls attention to problems of succession that afflicted the *princeps*, on whom alone the *res Romana* manifestly did depend.

The apotheosis of Hersilia is even more remarkable, and Ovid's de-euhemerizing revision of Roman history enters upon fresh territory with her. With Hersilia there was probably no euhemeristic tradition for Ovid to work against, so he could invent an apotheosis for her, representing it as a purely divine initiative.[60] Tradition granted her notable exploits without apotheosis; Ovid grants her apotheosis without notable exploits. She was well known to Roman readers for being the Sabine wife of Romulus and for her active role in reconciling her own people to the Romans. In several accounts, after the abduction of the Sabine women and subsequent conflict between Romulus's men and the angry parents, Hersilia sues for peace with Tatius and the Sabine fathers (Gellius 13.23.13; Dio Cass. 1.6). Her other signal achievement takes place shortly thereafter. According to Livy, Romulus blames the Sabine parents for the conflict, which resulted from their pride in not allowing intermarriage in the first place (1.9.14). Hersilia, importuned by the entreaties of her sister

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[58] Binder (1971) 163 n. 68.

[59] On Romulus and Augustus in the *Fasti*, see Barchiesi (1994) 101–12, 143–53, 155–65 = (1997b) 112–23, 154–64, 166–77.

[60] Wissowa (1904) 142 regards Hersilia's apotheosis as Ovid's invention; see Skutsch (1985) 246, Domenicucci (1991) 223–24.

Sabines, intervenes with Romulus to argue that their parents ought to be pardoned and allowed to live in Rome: *ita rem coalescere concordia posse* (1.11.2). Harmonious union of Romans and Sabines is, according to Livy's patriotic interpretation, the whole point of the rape of the Sabine women; and this view was widespread: "it was not in wanton violence or injustice that they resorted to rape, but with the intention of bringing the two peoples together and uniting them with the strongest ties." So writes Plutarch in introducing Hersilia (*Romulus* 14.7); Dionysius of Halicarnassus also accepts this pro-Roman motive for the rape (2.30.6).[61]

Hersilia's achievements, like those of her husband, disappear entirely from Ovid's account of her apotheosis, as does the whole story of the rape of the Sabines, in which she traditionally plays so important a part. After Romulus's transformation into the deified Quirinus, Juno sends Iris to bring instructions to the grieving widow, addressing Hersilia as "chief glory of both the Latin and Sabine peoples": '*o et de Latia, o et de gente Sabina/praecipuum, matrona, decus*' (14.831–32). Has Juno become reconciled to the Romans this time because of their union with the Sabines, a people known for exemplary piety? We might suppose so, especially now that Romulus is identified with the Sabine divinity Quirinus.[62] For whatever reason, Juno offers Hersilia a chance to see her husband again if she will go, under Iris's guidance, to the Quirinal, "Quirinus's hill," a place associated with the Sabines' presence in Rome:[63]

> siste tuos fletus et, si tibi cura uidendi
> coniugis est, duce me lucum pete, colle Quirini
> qui uiret et templum Romani regis obumbrat. (14.835–37)

> Stop your tears and, if you care to see your husband, under my guidance seek the grove that grows green on Quirinus's hill, and shades the temple of Rome's king.

Hersilia follows Iris's instructions and proceeds to Romulus's hill; a star descends, causing Hersilia's hair to catch fire—a divine portent—

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[61] See Wiseman (1983) 445–46.

[62] See Salmon (1967) 145: "No doubt Varro has exaggerated the number of gods supplied to the Romans by his ancestors. Even so, the Sabines' reputation for *pietas* shows that their influence on Roman religious development could hardly have been negligible."

[63] As Salmon (1967) 145 n. 3 remarks, "Varro automatically regarded any cult that was fostered on the Quirinal (the hill with Sabine associations) as Sabine."

and she passes into the air; Rome's founder receives her, changes her name and body, calling her Hora, '*quae nunc dea iuncta Quirino est*' (*Met.* 14.851).[64]

Of course, Hersilia's apotheosis, like Romulus's, can be allegorized as panegyric: Domenicucci draws the expected parallel to Livia, so reinforcing the connection of Romulus to Augustus.[65] Yet if Ovid's goal in this double apotheosis is to promote panegyrical identifications, he has lost an impressive opportunity. Especially after his irreverent, even scandalous, version of the rape in *Ars amatoria* 1, Ovid could now have made amends with Augustus and with history by serving up a traditionally patriotic rape of the Sabines, including the achievements of Romulus and Hersilia, both available for euhemeristic treatment. Ovid's version is once again conspicuously remote from Ennius's. It is unlikely that Hersilia's transformation into the divine Hora occurred in the *Annales*, and Ovid probably originated Hersilia's apotheosis.[66] In doing so, Ovid remythologizes history, reducing human agency and minimizing the potential of his Roman characters to serve as flattering parallels.

In evaluating the historical character of the *Metamorphoses*, we can view apotheosis as part of historical progress in the work. As we saw above, Wheeler regards the movement from fable to history, from the heavens to the city of Rome, as "a shift from a *theologia fabulosa* to a *theologia civilis.*"[67] Another view is, however, possible, in accordance with which the fabulous incorporates all else into its domain— including history, politics, and current events. Terms like "fabulous" and "mythological," of course, are not simply descriptive of the subject matter that Ovid has taken up; he has entirely transformed the nature of the fabulous, mythological, and the historical alike. He Ovidianizes them all, Hersilia no less completely than the rest. When Iris reports Juno's words to the bereaved Hersilia, she eagerly asks to see once again the face of her husband, concluding her request with these words: '*quem si modo posse uidere/fata semel dederint, caelum accepisse fatebor*' (*Met.* 14.843–44). Hersilia is using *caelum* as a metaphorical equivalent for the summit of happiness, as Bömer aptly notes,

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[64] On the name Hora, see Bömer *Met.* 7:244–45.

[65] Domenicucci (1991) 228.

[66] On Hora in Ennius see Skutsch (1985) 247–49; he does not regard Ovid as following Ennius in the deification of Hersilia.

[67] Wheeler (2000) 139–40.

citing Cicero's letters to Atticus: *in caelo sum* (*Att.* 2.9.1); *Bibulus in caelo est* (*Att.* 2.19.2). Hersilia supposes Romulus "lost" (*amissum, Met.* 14.829) and evidently knows nothing yet of his apotheosis—certainly nothing about her own. She simply uses a conventional, proverbial form of speech to express her anticipated happiness.[68] But events make her expression literally true, as the star descends and Hersilia rises to the heavens. Ovid's transformative wordplay often operates in just this way: words that initially appear figurative become literal, the conceptual shifts to the physical, and a transformation described in terms of plot is enacted first on the level of style.[69] Hersilia's apotheosis is a fine instance of Ovidian wit, yet is also a typical instance, similar to many others that readers have enjoyed by this stage in the work's progress. As they enjoy another of Ovid's transformative witticisms, they also may reflect on the power of his transformative vision, which now incorporates even their own history. As he exploits Hersilia's apotheosis for so fine a joke, Ovid grants us an ironic perspective on Roman origins, compromising their fatedness and bringing out their contingent character.

Throughout the last pentad, historical events lose their connection to *fata* and pass under the sway of Fama in its full range of ambiguity and contradiction: "lies mixed with truth" (*mixtaque cum ueris . . . commenta*, 12.54) issue from the house of Fama, while "Fame, the herald of truth" (*praenuntia ueri/fama*, 15.3–4), announces Numa's impossible visit to Pythagoras. Fama is a touchstone for the fractured historical vision of the *Metamorphoses*.

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[68] See Otto (1890) 62.9.

[69] On witticisms of this sort, see Tissol (1997) 20–26.